2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 APl Burma
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CHAPTER XXXVIII

GAMES

A VERY favourite game with Burmans of all ages is the gônnyinto pwè. The name is very suggestive. Gôn or hkôn means to jump, and nyin is to deny or bluster, and there is no doubt of the fitness of the implication. A more noisy and contentious game, not even omitting the uproariousness of the English enormities known as grab or pit, it would be difficult to find. Most writers on Burma have passed over gônnyinwaing lightly, as a simple, harmless, children's game. It would be well if it were only that, though the monks at the pôngyi kyaung often sally forth in great wrath (most dangerous for their future state), and armed with a stout bamboo, to put a stop to the clamorous disputes of the schoolboys over their seeds. But the police officers would tell a very different tale. Grown-up men play also, the quarrels sometimes end in assault and murder, and always in reckless gambling. Beinshu, opium-eaters, who with all respectable Burmans stand for types of iniquity, a kind of epitome of vice, often have as much as two or three hundred rupees on a single game, and the results of unrestrained gambling are best known to civilised people who frequent Monte Carlo. Consequently the police keep a sharp eye on grown-up gônnyinto players, and if a party is caught, they are all punished heavily for gambling, the daing, or keeper of the ground, being fined heaviest of all. For there are regular alleys kept for the purpose, the daing, or proprietor, carefully smoothing the ground, moistening it delicately in the hot weather, and keeping it from getting sodden during the monsoon. He charges his customers a small fee for the right to play, usually an anna in the rupee,

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belonged to his wife, for she had inherited it from her father, together with a house and a little money. The man had nothing when he married her, but he was hardworking and honest and good-tempered, and they kept themselves going comfortably enough. But he had one fault: every now and then he would drink too much. This was in Lower Burma, where liquor shops are free to Burmans. In Upper Burma no liquor can be sold to them. He did not drink often. He was a teetotaler generally; but once a month, or once in two months, he would meet some friends, and they would drink in good fellowship, and he would return home drunk. His wife felt this very bitterly, and when he would come into the house, his eyes red and his face swollen, she would attack him with bitter words, as women do. She would upbraid him for his conduct, she would point at him the finger of scorn, she would tell him in biting words that he was drinking the produce of her fields, of her inheritance; she would even impute to him, in her passion, worse things than these, things that were not true. And the husband was usually good-natured, and admitted his wrong, and put up with all her abuse, and they lived happily till the next time.

After this had been going on for a few years, instead of getting accustomed to her husband, instead of seeing that if he had this fault he had many virtues, and that he was just as good a husband as she was a wife, or perhaps better, her anger against him increased every time, till now she would declare that she would abide it no longer, that he was past endurance, and she would have a divorce; and

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several times she even ran to the elders to demand it. But the elders would put it by. 'Let it wait,' they said, 'for a few days, and then we will see'; and by that time all was soothed down again. But at last the end came. One night she passed all bounds in her anger, using words that could never be forgiven; and when she declared as usual that she must have a divorce, her husband said: 'Yes, we will divorce. Let there be an end of it.' And so next day they went to the elders both of them, and as both demanded the divorce, the elders could not delay very long. A few days' delay they made, but the man was firm, and at last it was done. They were divorced. I think the woman would have drawn back at the last moment, but she could not, for very shame, and the man never wavered. He was offended past forgiveness.

So the divorce was given, and the man left the house and went to live elsewhere.

In a few days—a very few days—the wife sent for him again. 'Would he return?' And he refused. Then she went to the headman and asked him to make it up, and the headman sent for the husband, who came.

The woman asked her husband to return.

'Come back,' she said, 'come back. I have been wrong. Let us forgive. It shall never happen again.'

The man shook his head.

'No,' he said; 'a divorce is a divorce. I do not care to marry and divorce once a week. You were always saying, "I will divorce you, I will divorce you." Now it is done. Let it remain.'

The woman was struck with grief.